A

SERMON

PREACHED UPON THE OCCASION OF OPENING A

CHARITY SCHOOL

IN WARRINGTON.

BRITISH
MUSEUM

The Resources of Christian Charity:

A

SERMON

UPON THE OCCASION OF OPENING A

CHARITY SCHOOL

IN WARRINGTON,

FOR THE PURPOSE OF

CLOTHING, SUPPORTING AND INSTRUCTING

POOR CHILDREN,

UPON AN INCORPORATED PLAN,

UNTIL THEY ARE FITTED FOR BUSINESS,

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1782.

By EDWARD OWEN, M.A.
RECTOR OF THE PARISH.

PRINTED BY W. EYRES;
And sold by HIM, Mrs. BANCKS, and W. ASHTON, WARRINGTON;
and T. LOWNDES, LONDON: Price 6d.
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TO

Mr. WATKINS and Mr. DANNETT,

THE ACTING TRUSTEES OF THE

CHARITY SCHOOL IN WARRINGTON.

I PUBLISH this Sermon, with your approbation, in the plain unornamented language of the heart in which it was delivered, and in which, as I conceive, all diſcourſes ſhould addreſs themſelves to a mixt audience. To propoſe profits to the Charity from the ſale, were an idle project. The ſucceſs of my former more elaborate, and therefore worſe piece, was owing to the zeal and aſſiduity of our diſtant friends; to whom the Charity is much more obliged, than to the author whom they patroniſed, and whoſe names, as being too numerous for this place, muſt be gratefully recorded elſewhere by us—though Mr. Heſketh of Liverpool, in particular, muſt be thanked

here alſo for his ſingular ſervices. But this mode of begging admits not of a repetition. Sermons (occaſional ones eſpecially) being grown trite and common, have drawn upon themſelves the uſual conſequence of familiarity; they are paſt by with contempt, or twirled over with cold indifference. I have, however, another view, which may poſſibly ſucceed.

CHARITABLE as our age and country are, I do not think the reſources of charity, according to the pureſt principles of the Goſpel, are yet generally underſtood, or at leaſt fully exerted. I pretend not indeed to preciſion. But the hints I have thrown out with unpoliſhed plainneſs, may be ſufficient, perhaps they may be the beſt method. My preſent object and ambition, therefore, (beſides a little vanity, which I muſt own, of appearing uſeful in ſo laudable an undertaking,) is, that ſome perſons may be found, who will agree with me in ſentiments, and condeſcend to buy and diſperſe this diſcourſe upon

upon the eaſy terms mentioned in the title page, and that others may ſubmit to read it with patience and attention. Poſſibly, by this means, it may have its uſe; by diſperſing the ſeeds of charity more widely than it could from the pulpit, and producing a more plentiful harveſt in ſome future time.

THE contributors at large will not, they cannot in juſtice be diſpleaſed, that I particulariſe a few out of their number. You, whoſe zeal is the firſt movement in our machine, can atteſt the truth of what I aſſert. It is ſufficient for all, that the memory of their benefactions will be perpetuated, where it ought to be, in the grateful records of the charity—their reward they will expect elſewhere—But I could not forgive myſelf, if I had not *paid* this particular *tribute* of praiſe, *where the tribute was due.*

I ADDRESS it to you, in preference to other contributors, though ſome of them

are your ſuperiors in rank; becauſe we are indebted to your ſpirit for much that has been done, and expect much more from you in future.

THIS public ſpirit of yours, and your many private virtues make me, with great truth and eſteem,

Dear SIRS,

Your affectionate

humble Servant

WARRINGTON, *Feb.* 4, 1782. E. OWEN.

P. S. SINCE I wrote the above, I am authoriſed to inform the public, that Mr. Eyres gives half the expence of print and paper, and an anonymous benefactor gives the other half.

A

CHARITY SERMON, &c.

2 THESS. iii. 13.

Be not weary in well-doing.

WELL, (bleſſed be God!) the Charity we have been long praying for with ſolicitude, is at laſt eſtabliſhed; eſtabliſhed with the moſt auſpicious omens, the moſt encouraging proſpects of ſucceſs! What fruits, what bleſſed fruits may we not expect from it! What heart dilates not at the pleaſing ſight! What generous boſom throbs not with tranſport!

1. BUT I muſt collect myſelf. Though it becomes us to rejoice; yet our joy muſt be religious. We muſt look up beyond *ſecond* cauſes, and acknowledge God as the firſt author of this bleſſing. This will conſecrate what we have done; and entail upon it the beſt of patronages, the Divine favour. And, if God's providence over-rules and directs all things; if he makes even the *wills* of men, without deſtroying their freedom, ſubſervient to his own wiſe and good purpoſes (and this we learn amongſt the firſt rudiments of Chriſtian knowledge;) we muſt certainly ſee and acknowledge

acknowledge his propitious hand in the preſent kind event, which ſo far tranſcends our firſt hopes and wiſhes. It is the buſineſs of piety to acknowledge his agency in every thing, but in the *guilt* of wicked purpoſes and wicked deeds.

As the foundation, then, of our thankfulneſs to God, it muſt ever be remembered among us, that our firſt efforts for a long time were but feeble, almoſt ineffective; and that a ſudden unexpected offer of a moſt liberal donation from a worthy and exemplary neighbour,* and another conſiderable donation from another excellent perſon† who is but very ſlightly connected with this town, gave life and vigour to our languiſhing deſign; and the emulative exertions of many among ourſelves, *according to their power*, yea, and in ſome inſtances *(I bear them record) beyond their power*, have conducted it, as we ſee, to the happieſt iſſue. We have now nothing to do (after firſt thanking God, and our benefactors next) but to carry on with ſpirit, what has been ſo *auſpiciouſly*, and, I muſt add, ſo *providentially* begun.

2. A LITTLE from a great number of contributing hands, forms a great aggregate. A little thus united, will do great good, without any perceptible inconvenience to benevolent individuals.

EVERY thing great and uſeful on earth is the work of time; of ſlow and gradual increaſe. A man could

* John Blackburne, of Orford, Eſq. † Mrs. Bold, of Bold.

not

not imagine beforehand (if he had not experience to convince him of the fact) that the ſtately tree, which comforts him with its nutritious fruits and hoſpitable ſhade, ever ſprang from a diminutive ſeed. And yet the gradual operation of nature effects it; and is a call upon human emulation in all attempts which are truly laudable. It is a certain fact, that the greateſt Charities in this kingdom have ariſen, with parity of growth, from ſmall beginnings; and have been improved to their preſent degree of magnificence and utility, by the united efforts of private Chriſtians.

And indeed the effect is natural. For charitable inſtitutions being once eſtabliſhed, once embodied, and once rendered objects of public notice, their viſible effects ſpeak for them, though with ſilent, yet an irreſiſtible force of perſuaſion. From the experience of their benefits, a generous emulation is excited; the kindly inſtincts are awakened; a contagious ſpirit, as it were, of liberality ſpreads; many a good heart, hidden to our eyes under the veil of human infirmities, catches the ſocial flame; and (what is ſtill more unſeen and yet as ſure) God ſecretly co-operates with good deſigns; and, with myſterious goodneſs, raiſes up reſources beyond our firſt hopes or conceptions. And hence comes the pleaſing effect; that eſtabliſhed charities do ſo much good: like rivers of ſettled courſe, they are augmented by the influx and acceſſion of tributary ſupplies, as they flow downwards and continue their beneficent progreſs.

In the mean time, we muſt not neglect our part. God expects our co-operation. We muſt exert ourſelves to keep up the emulative ſpirit, and augment the refreſhing current, both by the cheerfulneſs and the largeneſs of our contributions. And this mode, in particular, of annual collection is obvious and eaſy of execution.

3. St. Paul lays down the following rule. *Let a man labour, working with his hands the thing that is good*, i. e. let him follow ſome honeſt occupation with honeſt diligence; *that he may have* (continues the Apoſtle) *to give to him that needeth.* [Eph. iv. 28.] Here we are commanded, you may obſerve, to labour, as Chriſtians, for the purpoſes of CHARITY, as well as *prudence* and *convenience.* The meaneſt occupation is not exempted from the duty of beneficence. We muſt labour not only for our own maintenance, but that we may have ſomething *to* GIVE; ſomething to give to our SUFFERING brethren; to thoſe, on whom the LOT OF TRIBULATION falls in this *probationary* world.

We may, at leaſt, learn from this ſcripture precept to give, if not from our *conveniences*, yet from our *ſuperfluities*; and even this will provide abundant reſources for moſt caſes of diſtreſs. There are hardly any orders among us (except the *abſolutely neceſſitous*) who have not ſome kind of idle and ſuperfluous expences, which they may occaſionally retrench; and to make but a *temporary* deduction from our uſual eaſe and

and comfort of living, for the ſake of contributing to an uſeful charity, will be an act of virtuous ſelf-denial; and, as ſuch, a ſacrifice truly acceptable to the moſt High.

And is it much, I pray you, for the affluent to exerciſe this generous ſelf-denial amidſt the comforts of their abundance? When they are bleſt by God with plenty and variety of all conveniences; is it much to deny themſelves for a while, in a ſmall degree, for the ſake of doing a permanent and extenſive act of mercy? Is it much to exchange the grovelling, the fugitive pleaſure of mere appetite—for the refreſhing and laſting rapture of a beneficent deed, generouſly intended to convey happineſs, duteouſly conformed to the Supreme Will?

I own, the diſtinctions of ranks and ſtates muſt be ſupported. The order of the world requires it. But to live up to the extent of our inflamed appetites, is neither neceſſary, nor prudent, nor becoming us as men; whatever it may be in point of idle glare and cumbrous magnificence. Œconomy and temperance are Chriſtian virtues of the firſt magnitude. And if we regulate our expences by theſe virtues, I am ſure, the order of the world may be kept up, and yet ſufficient proviſion made for all exigences of innocent diſtreſs.

And with regard to the inferior claſſes; even well-diſpoſed people among them are known to diſſipate a deal of their profits, in the way of recreation; eſpecially at the cloſe of their weekly labours.

Not

NOT that I blame recreation, where care is taken to guard againſt *guilty exceſſes*. Bodily labour, like mental ſtudy, may innocently relax itſelf: after relaxation it returns with alacrity to its wonted employments. And yet, would it not be eaſy, even for this claſs of our brethren, to divert their idle expences into the bleſſed channel of beneficence? Their ſelf-denial (as I ſaid before) will make it a virtue, and the pleaſure of doing good will be their reward and refreſhment. Believe me, *benevolent* acts afford a refreſhment above all *animal* gratifications. Oh! how the boſom warms and expands itſelf, in the conſciouſneſs of doing a good deed! how the blood flows more briſkly through the throbbing heart! and charity may be literally ſaid *to be health to the navel, and marrow to the bones!*

WE need not therefore doubt of ſucceſs, if we conſider this charitable foundation as we ought, and exerciſe that liberality, to which all Chriſtians are called without exception.

THE only danger is, leſt what I ſay may be miſapprehended and give offence. Let me explain myſelf. The world have a ſtrange notion about ſuperfluities. They imagine that their wealth is their own, and may be ſquandered as they pleaſe; not conſidering that God and the poor have their claims upon them. Hence we ſee, the great man often thinks that a few pence (toſſed with an unkind diſdainful air) is a great charity, while he ſquanders away talents in a luxurious treat, wanton changes of dreſs, idle

jaunts

jaunts of pleaſure, and many worſe ways beneath the dignity of this place to mention. Hence alſo, the inferior artiſan ſtares at you with inſolent ſurpriſe, if you expect ſix-pence from him in charity, while he ſquanders away ſhillings, perhaps pounds, in looſe and profligate pleaſures. Hence too, he *wilfully* miſtakes the *relative* nature of opulence and poverty; though eaſy to be underſtood: for a great man may, in certain circumſtances, be the poor man, becauſe his rank requires as much as he has, or more; and an artiſan may be the rich man, becauſe many circumſtances may give him, what to *him* may be called abundance or ſuperfluity. But this man (when ſelfiſh) wilfully overlooking this plain obſervation, can with much ſelf-complacency exonerate himſelf, and leave it to thoſe others to do good, whom he is pleaſed, with artificial modeſty, to call abler than himſelf.

I AM no enemy, as I ſaid before, to the recreations of the poor, or the hoſpitality and diſtinctions of the rich. But certainly a temporary and occaſional deduction might be made by either of theſe orders from their expences with eaſe—I am ſure, with great advantage to their ſouls, and the better intereſts of futurity. No one, according to the rule of charity, needs diſtreſs himſelf. The rule is conciſe and full. *Be merciful after thy power; if thou haſt much, give plenteouſly; if thou haſt little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little: for ſo gathereſt thou to thyſelf a good reward againſt the day of neceſſity.* [Tob. iv. 8.] A willing mind is the beſt interpreter of this rule; and will

will be reſtrained by no conſiderations but thoſe of undiſſembled and virtuous inability.

By way of farther proof, let us advert to a plain fact. What large ſums do we ſee often raiſed by the voluntary aſſociations of our artiſans for the purpoſes of mutual ſupport, by very ſmall weekly proportions! How uſeful, how extenſive do we ſee them in their beneficial effects! Do but the ſame, once in the year, in its due and larger proportion, for the glory of God, and the benefit of your fellow-creatures, your neighbours, perhaps your *immediate ſelves* (for your children or relations, in the revolutions of time and the viſitations of an unſearchable Providence, may be the objects;) and great will be the effects of your liberality! What a greater bleſſing may you expect upon your kind contributions! Surely, the gracious Father of all, the gracious Giver of fruitful ſeaſons, who annually *renews the face of the earth*, and recruits the *waſtes* even of our *luxuries* and extravagances with the returning year's increaſe, will pour down his peculiar bleſſing upon what we *ſow* in good deeds! He has ſo promiſed, and we may ſafely truſt him.

The poſſibility, therefore, of ſupporting and increaſing the fund of our excellent inſtitution, if according to our duty (as we have juſt ſeen) we cooperate and exert ourſelves with ſpirit and vigour, is not to be doubted. It remains only to be conſidered, whether the object of it be really ſo important as to deſerve our zeal. Be this, then, our next conſideration.

4. Is

4. Is it a matter (let it be aſked) of ſuch immenſe conſequence, to have a public receptacle for the education of poor children? Is their education a matter of importance to the community? at leaſt might it not be carried on, upon its old foundation, without any other forms or aſſiſtances?

In anſwer to this, I muſt aſſert, that there is not a greater ſpecies of charity, carried on, this day, in the kingdom, than that of educating, clothing and ſupporting poor children. It is an epitome of all charities. It compriſes all their benefits, and is liable to no perverſion.

For pray, conſider. Do you think it charity, to relieve a poor, famiſhed, emaciated creature, begging a piece of bread at your door? Would you divide your *morſel*, to feed the miſerable creature who is ready to die for hunger? Would you ſtrip yourſelf almoſt of a *neceſſary garment* to cover a poor wretch ſhivering with cold, and ready to periſh in his nakedneſs? There is no one ſo hard-hearted as to refuſe theſe acts of common humanity. And yet, to educate and feed and clothe the children of the poor, is to do this in the higheſt degree. Here there can be no impoſitions, no deceit, no abuſe. Here that painful apprehenſion, that often repreſſes the ſweet ſympathy of the heart, the fear of encouraging the *worthleſs*, has no place: here is a certainty of doing good to the moſt deſerving of objects.

They are ſelected upon knowledge. They are admitted by a mode, that knows nothing of affection or

 diſlike,

diſlike, partiality or any poſſible influence. They are the children of your neighbours, whom you know, whoſe neceſſities you muſt commiſerate, who have even a legal claim to your aſſiſtance. Your charity falls, like a fruitful ſhower, where it is wanted: you ſee its effects with your eyes in the refreſhment it produces. You may look up to God, with humble confidence that he accepts of your pious oblations. You are imitating and obeying *him*, who delights to do good *himſelf*, and expects goodneſs from his *creatures* as the teſt of their faith and obedience.

NAY, I muſt not ſtop here. Bodily relief, though a great act of charity, yet is the ſmalleſt object of this generous inſtitution. Innumerable other advantages are to be expected from it.

YOUTH, it is well known, is the proper time of *education*—the greateſt of all bleſſings, the beſt of all inheritances, the ſource both of preſent and future happineſs. It is a pliant, flexible and teachable ſtate. It puts man under diſcipline, at the proper time of culture; before bad habits are formed amidſt the corruptions of the world. Vices have their infancy like men. At firſt, they may be eaſily reſtrained; but when time and habit have given them their full maturity; we find them, by fatal experience, too powerful for grace or reſolution, advice, perſuaſion, or reſtraint.

IT is therefore the wiſe man's advice; *train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* [Prov. xxii. 6.] A well-trained child

child acquires a ſort of *amiable prejudice* in favour of virtue; a certain delicate ſenſibility, that *recoils* at foul deeds and conceptions; and this becomes a ſort of ſentinel to him to warn him of danger upon an inclination to go aſtray.

ADD to this, that the right education of the riſing age is one of God's great means of improving the world. To turn out young people upon the great theatre of buſineſs, well qualified for its occupations by knowledge and virtuous habits, is ſetting up ſo many lights and good examples for the improvement of their neighbours around them.

ONLY form, by way of illuſtration, the following ſuppoſition. Imagine a well-diſpoſed conſcientious man, labouring uſefully and regularly in ſome laudable occupation—following it with honeſt diligence and ſobriety—carrying his family at his ſide, on days of piety, with becoming gravity, to the houſe of God—reſtraining them on thoſe ſacred days from looſe and profane diverſions, and teaching them the fear of the Lord with real ſerioufneſs—employing them, during the week, in the acquiſition of ſome uſeful buſineſs or knowledge—imagine all the ſalutary fruits of this exemplary care—his children a comfort, bleſſing and ſupport to him—his affairs in an eaſy and flouriſhing ſtate—his houſhold in peace and plenty, decency and good order;—imagine, I ſay, theſe things: and have you not before your eyes the *full portrait* of the uſeful and laudable citizen in the inferior department of life? Is not the community benefited by this man's inſtructive example, and by the fruits of his humble, but amiable virtues?

AND muſt not, then, Charity Schools, which turn out their *multitudes* of ſuch characters into the world, be a public bleſſing? Yes, in proportion as we extend the ſphere of education, we extend human happineſs. We leſſen the ignorance, profaneneſs and profligacy, that create our greateſt diſorders. Give the young good principles, and they will be peaceful and uſeful members both of church and ſtate.

A HEATHEN writer could ſay, *Let nothing, impure either to the eye or ear, enter the doors where a child reſides.* And with what advantage muſt charity ſchools operate, where children are taken early from the infectious examples of wicked parents and neighbours, and carefully guarded againſt the inroads of infection? Where they are ſecluded, and kept at a ſafe diſtance from temptations? where their time is pleaſingly diverſified, between the ſucceſſive exerciſes of prayer, learning, induſtry, and neceſſary recreation? Where, in ſhort, they are trained up to health and ſtrength and manly vigour, to arts and commerce, to the virtues of ſocial life; and (what is the ground work of all) to a true ſenſe of God's authority?

WHAT, I pray you, can form human creatures either for the world or for heaven, better than this plan; if man be a *teachable* creature *at all*, which I ſuppoſe no infidel will deny?

5. BUT I muſt reſtrain myſelf. The time permits me not to indulge the pleaſing theme. I ſhall content myſelf, therefore, with obſerving but two things more.

YOU

You muſt ſee by what I have ſaid, that the religion, which this charity has for its object, is the ſpirit of *general* piety and virtue only; and I obſerve this for the ſake of the candid among ourſelves, and of thoſe of other perſuaſions who vouchſafe to mix with us upon this occaſion. The promoting of the particular views of parties, as parties, belongs to themſelves; and as far as they, upon *full enquiry*, think themſelves right, they are juſtifiable at the throne of mercy. But general religion, that general ſpirit of piety and virtue, which makes the good citizen and good candidate for heaven, is the common concern of all. God is the common Father of Jews and Gentiles, of all ſects and parties; and to promote his honour and ſervice is the common duty of all who acknowledge his being, and eſpecially his gracious revelation.

It is true indeed the mode of inſtitution, to be followed within thoſe walls, is that of the Church Catechiſm. But, it is certain, *ſome* form muſt be followed, and this catechiſm is, I think, generally acknowledged to be the moſt candid, ſimple, unexceptionable ſummary of moral truth in the Chriſtian world; being nothing but the fundamentals of Goſpel belief and practice, the pure unadulterated principles of general piety and virtue, in which all Chriſtians are or ſhould be agreed. It may be ſaid, indeed, that though the inſtitution itſelf be ſimple, yet many expoſitions of it take a wider compaſs, and graft upon it a great number of diſputed doctrines. But the conduct of charity ſchools neither admits of the leiſure nor power to teach any thing more than plain practical

practical religion, (happy were it, could they do this effectually!) and any one may know this to be the caſe by a little attention to experience. It is true alſo, nay, it is to be expected and to be wiſhed, that the young will acquire ſome habitudes of mind inclining them to the *eſtabliſhment* in that courſe of education;—and, I ſay this, becauſe, the poor of ſeparate ſects generally ſinking into the maſs of the community, the eſtabliſhment has the principal burden of relieving them, and acquires the principal right of forming their education;—but the candour and the genuine *catholiciſm* of the plan muſt incline them to a *tolerant* and lenient eſtabliſhment; and as this, I hope, is the wiſh of the wiſe and good of all parties, of all who *love peace, and turn not liberty into licentiouſneſs*, the charity demands of courſe (to recur to our firſt poſition) the common notice and patronage of all.*

I WOULD only farther obſerve, that many diſtinguiſhed characters in different parts of theſe kingdoms, have been thus educated—being at the ſame time ornaments to the community, and ſtanding monuments of the utility of theſe inſtitutions.

6. ENCOURAGE, then, a good work, ſo powerfully recommended to you by ſo many conſiderations both human and divine. Embrace the preſent opportunity of doing good. It may be (and this is a ſerious conſideration!) it may be your laſt. Many of us may be

* IT is a fact which ought not to be concealed (becauſe it tends to benefit the charity by a diſtinguiſhed example;) that Dr. Enfield, though a miniſter in the ſeparation, honoured theſe ſentiments by an expreſſive mark of his approbation, a liberal contribution, in which he has been followed by ſeveral of the principal members of his ſociety.

called

called away to our great account, before another anniverſary returns. Do good, therefore, while it is in the power of your hand. Lay up your treaſures in heaven againſt the hour of neceſſity. Say not, *what are the poor to me? why muſt I leſſen my wealth or my pleaſures, to ſerve I know not whom, perhaps idle and thankleſs aliens?*—Ah! uſe not this unkind and ungracious language. God makes both rich and poor. He alone gives the powers and opportunities of getting wealth; he gives it upon this expreſs condition, that we muſt aſſiſt our poorer brethren; and has made us of ſuch a nature, that to ſerve others, is to ſerve ourſelves in the trueſt manner. What you lay out upon your luſts, periſhes with the uſing; what you ſtore up with fooliſh unneceſſary providence, muſt he left behind you; perhaps to be the bane and ruin of thoſe that inherit it. But what you lay out in good deeds, goes before you into the world for which you are ultimately made, and will continue your own. Yes, you will find it depoſited in faithful remembrance with the Almighty, and repaid you with infinite increaſe in his eternal kingdom.

Oh! how blind, how miſerable the man, who dares not truſt God with his riches! Who, from poor motives of worldly prudence or worldly eaſe, provides not an inheritance in the world of Spirits, whither he ſoon muſt go; to live in miſery unutterable, if he makes not God his *friend!* The words of ſcripture are very clear and deciſive: *He ſhall have judgment without mercy, who ſhowed no mercy*; [James ii. 13.]

ii. 13.] and without God's mercy, we know, no ſon of Adam can be ſaved!

If the terrors of the Lord cannot alarm you, let the glories of heaven invite you. Hear then, how our bleſſed Redeemer welcomes the charitable to their bliſs, and learn from hence to love and practiſe works of mercy!

Come, ye bleſſed of my Father—[will he ſay—*come and receive the recompenſe of your good deeds*] *I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink; naked, and ye clothed me; ſick, and ye viſited me: Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!* [Matt. xxv. 34.]

My brethren!—Be it our ambition to be enrolled among this triumphant company of ſaints in glory! May we make this our bleſſed choice! And ſtudy, above all *other* riches, to be, as the Scripture commands us, RICH IN GOOD WORKS! [1 Tim. vi. 18.]

THE END.

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